

THE
ANTI-INFIDEL
AND
RELIGIOUS ADVOCATE.

"It is a duty we owe to God, as the fountain and author of all truth, who is Truth itself, and it is a duty also we owe ourselves, if we deal candidly and sincerely with our own souls, to have our minds constantly disposed to entertain and receive truth wheresoever we meet with it, or under whatever appearance."—*Locke.*

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THE GOSPEL MIRACLES CREDIBLE.

IN the denial of those acts, recorded in the Gospels, which imply the agency of supernatural power, the enemies of Revealed Religion have attempted to fortify their position by alleging, that miracles are contrary to general experience, or to individual experience in general, that thence they are incredible; and, therefore, that Christianity must be false because it assumes that miracles are true. It is not difficult to detect the sophistical mode by which this objection would allure the mind from a just comprehension of the subject which it endeavours to falsify and defame.

No one, it may be concluded, who wished to ascertain the harmony and proportions of a large edifice, would confine his observation to an individual stone or a single projection; but would endeavour to survey the parts in connection with the whole. Nor would such a mode of survey be more essential to the good appearance of the edifice itself, than to the correctness and validity of the opinion which such a person might deduce. If he had viewed the edifice in detached portions, without attempting their just combination, his deduction would be distorted and fallacious; not be-

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cause the building was repulsive and deformed, but because he had not the skill or inclination to make a proper use of his eyes: and ignorance or prejudice would be the parent of his mal-formed deduction and belief.

Such has been the case in the estimation which Hume, and a small lot of sceptics after him, have formed of Christianity as a system partly attested by miraculous evidence. They have artfully endeavoured to prevent it from being contemplated as a system composed of several parts, and attested by several kinds of evidence, and have thence singled out a constituent portion upon which the distorting power of sophistry might act with the greatest chance of undeserved and deceitful success. Incapable of urging a comprehensive and valid objection against the truth of Christianity, they have endeavoured to detach its miracles from every legitimate prior connection, and then attempted their subversion by a petty argument too infirm to risk a general attack on the compact body of entire Revelation; as guerillas assail and assassinate the detached parties of an army from whom they dread defeat.

But before noticing the specific objection that miracles are opposed to experience, and, therefore, incredible,

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it may be advisable to view the antecedent considerations with which they are connected. Among these considerations we shall mention the purpose for which they were alleged to have been performed, and the power by which they are alleged to have been produced.

That the unworthiness or importance of that for which miracles are alleged, has something to do in estimating their credibility, every candid and rational mind must be disposed to acknowledge. If their allied authentication be attached to that which is insignificant or contemptible, or if they were called in to prove that which common sense could discover or ascertain, or to demonstrate that which was already known and attested, then the relation of miracles might be disregarded, because there would be a presupposition against a supernatural interposition for what was already a matter of common perception and belief. To suppose that the Deity would display his power in an extraordinary manner upon that which common evidence and inquiry were sufficient to determine, attributes to him a capricious inconsistency of which finite rationality would be incapable.

But it cannot be asserted that miracles, connected with the introduction of such a system as Christianity, would be applied to a useless or unworthy purpose. The subjects which it includes and pretends to determine, are themselves of the highest importance, detached from any real or hypothetical Revelation. To be assured whether death is only another name for eternal extinction, or whether it be the introduction to another and everlasting state; to know whether happiness extends beyond the grave, and what are the means by which it may be secured, are questions so solemn and ponderous, and their determination so essential to the present welfare and satisfaction of man, that if human reason has been insufficient to afford their solution, it seems morally

certain that God would have communicated the required intelligence. But if such a communication be necessary; if there be any rationality in the demand for a specific assurance of a future state; if man have a curiosity respecting his final destination, shall it be said, that God has no method of attesting those truths which his justice would compel him to reveal? If he made a revelation of that which man wanted but could never discover, does it seem improbable that the truth of the disclosure should remain problematical from want of proof, or that attestation would be unworthily employed in connexion with such a Revelation? If God had the moral sympathy of a finite being, he could not resist disclosing required knowledge; while to imagine the absence of proof in such a disclosure is an absolute contradiction of his wisdom and power. Miracles, therefore, attached to a Divine Revelation are as probable as the Revelation itself is necessary; and its necessity can never be disproved until it shall appear that mankind can obtain the same degree of knowledge and assurance which Revelation affords without the aid of such a supernatural interposition. The testimony of past ages, as well as that of a present portion of the world, contradicts the hypothetical position of the sufficiency of human reason, and declares that Revelation is essential to the interests of man. The purpose of Christianity renders its alleged miracles more probable than unlikely; and it is thus to be remembered, that they are stated as in connection with a subject of the deepest moment, the truth of which could never exceed its value, and thus that they were in every way accordant with that for which they are said to have been performed.

But miracles are not only rendered compatible with probability by the proposed end and necessity of a Revelation, but also by being considered in connection with the power which

is displayed by God in other modes. Did creation indicate but a moderate degree of divine power, or did any of its operations display a deficiency which the possession of greater available energy would have prevented; if, between the divine volition and its proposed object, there were an obvious infirmity of means, we might then suppose that the power of God was limited and imperfect. But who can behold the prodigious scheme of the universe, and the constitution of the tremendous laws by which it is governed; who can see the revolutions of the gigantic planet, the tides and uplifted billows of the ocean, or hear the mighty echo of exploding thunders, without being impressed by the extent and perfection of that power by which such immense effects are produced and sustained! To resist the physical evidence of an Almighty Power, acting upon the suggestions of infinite wisdom, is the office of the insane, and not of the rational.

Now it is to this Being, of whose tremendous creative power we have visible and constant assurance, that the miracles of the Gospels are attributed as their cause. In asserting, therefore, that he performed something which it is beyond the power of human ability to accomplish, his previous operations or attributes are not in the least contradicted. A miracle does not suppose or imply the application of any new or additional power, which God had not previously exercised or possessed. To create a universe requires at least as much plastic energy as the resuscitation of a dead body; and the existence of the former presupposes and declares an ability for the latter. The only thing uncommon in the alleged miracles is, that the mode in which a previously existing power was displayed, underwent a variation to adapt it to a different class of circumstances. The power manifested in creation teaches the general truth of the existence of God; and the same power

is applied through a different mode to attest the particular truth of a specific Revelation. We find, therefore, that no essential principle of the Divine mind is violated by the attribution of miracles to God, for the authentication of the Christian Revelation. But it is the object of that objection which is now under our notice, so to allure, that God may be excluded from the mind in the estimation of the credibility of miracles: and many, by placing themselves in the position which he should hold, and deciding the probability of miracles by the human insufficiency rather than the divine ability to perform them, are betrayed into the conclusion that miraculous interposition is altogether impossible and unworthy of credence. But such a mode and such a deduction are fallacious, and detached from logical analogy. The demonstrated necessity for the interference of God, and his power and deducible inclination to give extraordinary aid where it was demanded, are established principles which are violated by such a violent rejection of the credibility of miracles.

The preceding considerations are certainly applicable and necessary to a right estimate of the questions of miracles. The object for which their performance is alleged is in every way worthy of God, and is, we might almost say, a necessary result of his determined attributes; while to deny his power of attesting the truth of what he revealed, is absurd and presumptuous:—it divests him of the ability and privilege of even a veracious man. If analogy be allowed its legitimate weight in argument, it might be inferred that, as power, in other cases, is invariably applied to a beneficial end, and as an object of utility is that by which it is universally excited; so Revelation, as necessary and useful, would likewise be proved and promoted by a striking manifestation of divine energy. As the end in one case produces the ap-

plication of necessary means, analogy suggests a similar application in the other. We have already evinced that no extra power is supposed or implied by the Gospel miracles; and thus the antecedent possibility of a miracle is demonstrated.

But it is not to be imagined that miracles were performed without the observance of some mode, nor in opposition to any acknowledged mental attribute of God. If the dead were raised, or if loaves were multiplied, the effect was not produced without the intervention of natural causes, stimulated in their operation by the Divine will. In the resuscitation of the dead, the body was probably adapted by a rapid natural process for a reunion with the vital principle or soul; the secondary or natural process being probably identical with ordinary modes; and the miracle consisting in the primary fiat of the first Cause. In like manner, it would not appear that the multiplication of loaves was accomplished without the application of physical means, acting with increased celerity, in obedience to the commandment of God. As order is observed in his visible operations in nature, so it would be observed in a miracle; the mode of which may be considered similar to or identical with that adopted in ordinary processes. There is, therefore, nothing incredibly surprising that He who produced the original connexion between the soul and body, should reconcile them by a similar but more rapid process, or that he should produce those other results by stimulated natural means, which men produce by artificial power. To human perception, a miracle may appear extraordinary; with God it is only an adapted and required exertion of his inherent energy, which is displayed with an equal degree of power in those objects which his creation constantly presents. The Gospel miracles, therefore, should be considered in their proper legitimate connection. They profess to be the work

of God; and instead of having their probability measured by the inability of man to effect such operations, it should be ascertained whether God has the power,—whether he has a demonstrated antecedent ability to do that of which he is the alleged Author.

We must now conclude these general observations, and defer the discussion of Hume's sophism of the insufficiency of testimony to substantiate miracles, till our next number. But what we have advanced are a few of the prior considerations which are absolutely required to a proper estimation of the subject. The necessity of a thing, and the power to produce it, are surely anterior in order to the credibility of the relation which is given after its alleged occurrence.

THE PAST AND PRESENT TIMES.

THE present are truly wonderful times. In Politics and Government founded on the social relations of man, all is changed or changing. Old creeds and systems are overthrown or are crumbling to decay by some sudden moral convulsion. Principles are being established affecting the rights of man in society, by which those rights are becoming known and recognised, and his civil interests secured, while the high and bigoted fervour of religious feeling is fast disappearing with the abuses which marked its career, and men descend to lower ground and seek in the current of the civil, moral, and political sphere, for motives of excitement and action. No swelling enthusiasm now rouses them to a disdain of mundane advantages,—to say prayers in mail and satiate their devotion with the blood of infidels and heretics: the holy war of the present times is one against bigotry, intolerance, and despotic power, considered as principles, and in the ardour with which this war is being carried on, the fervour of religious sentiment is grown tepid.

In past ages bigots were worshiped, and tyrants were popular—in the present the former are dwindling into merited insignificance, the latter are held up as the objects, politically speaking, of the public curse; and Religion herself invites man to kneel at her altars, not as a trembling slave but as a free disciple.

The present age has been emphatically termed the *Mechanical age**, but it may, perhaps, with more propriety be termed the *Practical age*. Codes and principles were written and expounded in former ages, but the mass of men in those ages do not appear to have possessed the necessary mental aptitude for appreciating and applying them. This remained for the present, in which vast mechanical and scientific improvements have, as it were, co-incidentally with this tendency to a diffusion of knowledge, burst forth upon us like magical illusions. By these means our ideas of the relations of the *outward*, or the *physical*, have been immensely multiplied, and a new and powerful light has been shed abroad on the social condition of man which may finally lead to such an application of physical knowledge—to moral and spiritual motives,—as will raise his mind again to its highest point—Religion. Thus may we hope for the ultimate harmony of Reason, Philosophy, and Religion in the human mind, which will awaken it, not to a consuming zeal, but to a zeal and devotion, genial, peaceful, and informing.

In confirmation of the view above taken of the inaptitude of former ages, when compared with the present, in regard to the *practical*, the *mechanical*, order of truth, the previous labours of priests, sophists, and philosophers, and their attempts to ameliorate the outward condition of man by purifying the inward and primary powers could effect no great and salutary changes in this condition,

such as are in progress in the present day.* Mankind, in those ages, were not in a state and condition to be reformed by such a process: the desired improvement of the mass, in respect to the true order of *outward things*, was to be commenced by the *practical* operation of this *practical* age. Philosophers of the past ages, the most humane of them, never procured the abolition of the torture, because Religion, which in those ages sanctioned its infliction, superseded the moral feeling and sentiment which the common sense, the *practical sense*, of the present sees to be only accordant with true Religion. For the rest, the few bright spirits that adorned the past were doomed to shine exclusively in a system of their own: the world without them was a dark expanse, into which, if aught of their light penetrated, it found no medium of reflection, but was dissipated and lost in the gulph of superstition. In this respect the improvement of the present age is the sublime prescription of Religion, Reason, and Philosophy; not a mere liberation from outward thralldom, but a glorious introduction to a diffusive charity which must eventually raise and ennoble human nature. "It is towards a higher freedom than mere freedom from oppression by his fellow-mortal that man dimly aims. Of this higher, heavenly freedom, which 'is man's reasonable service,' all his noble institutions, his faithful endeavours, and loftiest attainments, are but the body, and more and more approximated emblem."† Between the two orders of truth, *spiritual* or *inward* and *practical* or *outward*, there must be a mutual harmony. "Contradictions," says the great *Locke*, "cannot come from God." We have only to join the practical with the spiritual—the soul with the body—in order to as-

* Edinb. Rev. N. 98, p. 442.

* See an Essay on the "Signs of the Times,"—Edinb. Rev. No. 98, p. 449.

† Ibid.

cent farther towards perfection. True it is, indeed, that of yore Religion was "the thousand-voiced psalm from the heart of man to his invisible Father, the fountain of all goodness, beauty, truth, and revealed in every revelation of these*," but it is to be doubted whether the spirit of the solemn song partook most of the perception of goodness, beauty, and truth of Deity, or of irrational mysticism, blind intolerance, and the unholy pride and disorderly propensities which flow from these sources. It may at least be observed, in reference to this subject, that a *practical*, a real recognition by the heart of man, of the attributes in Deity, would have led men to a quite different apprehension of their duty to human nature than that which marked the orthodox course of those fearful times. This modern age has certainly no right to wish for a return of that barbarous though enthusiastic devotion, in which the decapitation of Infidels was considered and preached by the chief ministers of Religion, the monks, as the most certain and meritorious act of man to ensure for him the *entrée* at the gates of heaven. Without wishing the remark to operate as a dissuasive from the cultivation of a religious temper, it surely is happy for us that some other way is opening for us to the contemplation of the invisible world—that some other sort of religious zeal and enthusiasm is to actuate us in the search of that world than the enthusiasm of the crusaders.

If heavenly motives enter into earthly activities, the practical, or mechanical, becomes the ground of a religious operation, extended to a greater fullness and capability by this perfection of its external organs of action. The state of things at the present day, affords a striking and beautiful exemplification of the truth of this remark. We are not, then, to decry the *me-*

chanical from the abuse of it, but while labouring to perfect it, to apply it to its true end and scope,—the exalting and not the debasing of the *spiritual*. The *spiritual*, on the one hand, and on the other, the *practical* and *mechanical* departments of human consciousness and activity, which "work into one another and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably," will thus limit and define each other; their relative importance never does indeed in reality vary, although it may appear to do so in the current of outward things.* It should, therefore, be well borne in mind, that the religion and morality of former ages failed to destroy, on the contrary, that they cemented the distinctions of tyrant and slave. While superstition walked her gloomy path, men were unjust and overbearing, fierce and cruel; their magnanimity was tainted by meanness, their generosity by selfishness, and they presented moral anomalies to the eye of the present generation, beyond what are now to be found. It has been reserved for the *mechanical* justice of the present times to equalize human rights, and correct the superstitious reverence of papal power, ecclesiastical and temporal, which operated like an opiate, in former times, to charm the human mind into ready acquiescence to worse than Mahomedan tyranny and oppression. How, otherwise, can we account for the existence and toleration of such a moral phenomenon as the Inquisition,

* "To define the limits of these two departments [the *spiritual* or *dynamical* and the *mechanical*] of man's activity, which work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably, were by its nature an impossible attempt. Their relative importance, even to the wisest mind, will vary in different times, according to the special wants and dispositions of those times. Meanwhile, it seems clear enough that only in the right co-ordination of the two, and the vigorous forwarding of both, does our true line of action lie."—*Edinb. Rev.*—"Signs of the Times,"—No. 98, p. 452.

* *Edinb. Rev.* No. 98, p. 445,—"Signs of the Times."

whose sanguinary altars have not even yet ceased to reek, and her dungeons to echo with the groans of the victim. Under the fatal regimen of the past, the undefined power, morally speaking, of barons and bishops, governed all temporal and spiritual things. Gratitude, fidelity, and courage, were the virtues of the vulgar, a chivalrous generosity the chief endowment of the great. Both were indeed obedient to the call of superstition; physical austerities were substituted for intrinsic purification, and the turbid zeal of outward persecution for the pious warfare against the foes "of our own household"—the enemies within. Outward acts of hypothetical Religion were ostensibly performed to appease God, while in reality they were displayed, or at least were tainted with the motive, to excite the reverence of man and establish a spiritual tyranny by taxing the superstition of the multitude: thus did Religion herself communicate a contagious moral disease to the political world, and became a curse instead of a blessing to mankind. It is true that in those days sublime examples of self-denial, heroism, and even piety, were presented, and, as we have said, a generally diffused religious feeling pervaded them, and constituted a marked feature of those ages no longer visible in the present; but gross barbarity and cruelty, the results of what has been stated above respecting them, constituted a character of those times equally marked and equally distant from the spirit of the present times!

There does however, it must be admitted, appear to be strong ground for the assertion that the present age is in its character comparatively *mechanical*. The choral harmony of human hearts and voices ascends not to heaven with the fervour of the olden time: the conviction of the importance and reality of a future state, and of spiritual existence in general, has dwindled into secondary consequence in the estimation of mankind, and this

world alone, its hopes and enjoyments* appear to engross more exclusively in the present than in past times, the sphere of human cogitation and sentiment. A scepticism wide and universal, and not a whit less real and practical because not always explicitly avowed, might therefore, if it met with no counteraction, appear to be overtaking us. Reason has long been busy in demonstrating that nothing is real which is not physically deduced: sense and its immediate objects and adjuncts are regarded too generally as the only tests of truth: in vain the intellect trims its pinions for a higher flight, and attempts an ascent to what should be the grand scope of all its efforts—the Spiritual, the Eternal! What an intellectual pigmy is man if his career be confined to a few fleeting years!—What are his labours if destined but to gild a name? But if the immortal never-dying spirit carries with it hence an eternal perception of the utilities which it has been the instrument of effecting in time, then is the labour of magnanimity worthy the endurance, and human hope is consecrated to an object worthy of the aim of its possessor. The present age does indeed seem, in a great measure, *practically* lost to the belief of the *supernatural*, which it has become the fashion to scoff at. With the superstition of the past, we seem not only to have lost the spiritual fire of the past, but the intellectual belief of the age seems to have descended, and affects no longer heaven but earth. Former ages were characterized by a grosser sensuality and a more intense devotional aspiration,—like the present pilgrims of Mecca, the sensualist was not the less a religious devotee because he was a sensualist.—The friar of Copmanhurst was assuredly no sceptic, though he wielded a cudgel with sentiment and dexterity. But we of the present day, though surrounded by multiplied analogies which are destined to be subservient to leading us onward and upward, and which

urge us to the contemplation of our nature and the nature of our future condition of existence by the strongest appeals to our intellect and sensibilities, seem slow to build upon the basis thus acquired and presented to us, and the intellects of some of us seem, like the mole, prone to shrink from the day, and secure an habitation in subterranean darkness.

But the darkest hour must precede the dawn. The institutions of the present age, founded upon essential and not upon adventitious principles, will, unlike those of the past, become permanent, — varying only in their modes and adaptations. A broader view of the relations of things exerted upon an immensely increased sphere of these relations is enabling the present age to escape from the thralldom of the past, and to breathe the vital air of freedom unalloyed by the pestilential fumes of spiritual or temporal ambition. The love of *political* justice is becoming a practical *moral* sentiment widely disseminated, and this sentiment will, in the end, be regarded as a *religious* one, which will bind and perpetuate a true order of external things among mankind. Thus it may be anticipated that Religion herself will eventually descend on the firm basis of external order and truth, on which alone she can securely take her stand, and that the Mechanical and Practical will thus be united with the Moral and Spiritual energies of man!

J. O. F.

THE SPECIOUSNESS OF AVARICE.

THE vices by which the human heart is infected vary in their nature, mode, and effect, and they may be divided into the general character of physical and moral. The indulgence of the former is commonly attended with danger and inconvenience to the present comfort of man. Punishment and disgrace follow intemperance, and sensuality engenders disease and ac-

celerates decay. Yet both these modes will seem to arise more from impulse than deliberation, although by repetition they may be confirmed into a habit, the force of which cannot be resisted or destroyed. But the odium of opinion is ever attached to the drunkard and the libertine, and neither can let loose their propensities without incurring the castigation of contempt. Thus society checks their career, because their turpitude is tangible and obvious.

But there are other vices by which the moral character is desolated, which are not less malignant from being more concealed, and which are practised without incurring any great degree of extraneous reproach, unless they exceed the boundaries which vitiated custom has consented to define. Among these is avarice, one of the most universal and insidious inhabitants of the heart. Its modes of approach and introduction are the most artful and illusive, and by yoking itself with what is admired as prudence, it effects a substitution of all that is generous and sympathetic before its character is suspected or ascertained.

To be freed from the horrors of want, to escape the persecutions to which pride subjects poverty, and to obtain competence by exertion, is what all desire. Economy is called in to aid exertion, and for man's simple wants provision is easily made. But that which at first appeared to bound hope and secure happiness, is soon found inadequate, from the manifestation of wants that were concealed before.

The heart begins to pant for enlarged possessions and multiplied resources, and Prudence, wanting an ally, secretly unlocks the door to Avarice, which enters in disguise. Its influence is soon felt. It first gently stimulates "laudable economy," insinuates the danger of indulging benevolent impulse, and bestowing that which prudence would retain, while it insists on the necessity of a proper regard for self-interest, which is spe-

ciously recommended by the increased power which riches offered for doing good, and extending the sphere of usefulness. The whole of such suggestions are very plausible, and easily gain the credence of a predisposed heart. The desire of gain now increases its importunity. To get, and to keep as much as possible, gradually becomes the ruling passion, which subordinates all the more elevated sentiments and feelings; and if sympathy or reflection casts a transient reproach on the character which is thus being induced and nurtured, avarice flies at once to those first principles from which it has made such extreme deductions, and makes man's few legitimate wants sanction the cravings of rapacity; for it is indeed easy to convert a sound premise into the foundation of a bad consequence. Thus by an unobserved advance, does avarice conquer the human heart, and continually demand food for an increasing voracity.

There are some desires which may be indulged without a certain destruction of moral virtue, but avarice does not appear of their number. Its object is to amass, and he who is determined to accumulate has no great inclination to expend. But as his wealth multiplies, he may be asked to give or lend of his useless abundance, to rescue from a gaol, or mitigate the agonies of supplicating want. To resist such appeals, in all their varieties, is part of the business of avarice; and the refusal must be justified by some specious reason or motive. Inability must be alleged and substantiated to the feeble conscience, or some defect must be found in the conduct of the supplicant, which renders it improper to grant his request. In the first case, the mind is deceived by voluntary delusion, and in the last, the detection of a brother's real or hypothetical infirmity, inflates a pride of all others the most dangerous and malign.

But it is in its relations to eternity that avarice appears under its most awful character. The principles which

it has engendered and confirmed must be opposed to those which make heaven desirable and happy. If assimilation to the Divine Nature, as taught in the sermon on the mount, be one of the qualifications for eternal blessedness, then is avarice one of the remotest recession from the attributes and perfections of God. His design is to give enjoyment to increasing millions out of his abundant fulness; the desire of avarice is to enrich itself in useless acquisitions. How then could the avaricious man enjoy the society of those beings who partake, in a spiritual state of existence, of the adorable nature of the Deity? Hypothesis, however, may be dismissed, when the positive authority of Jesus Christ can be adduced, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures," is an injunction which is too practically disregarded by Christians, who imagine that they can unite the interests of God and mammon, and that religion is compatible with worldly-mindedness and rapacity.

It might indeed be supposed, from the intensity with which wealth is sought, that gold itself contained the essence of felicity, with which it constantly blessed its possessor. It is only a barren metal, upon which delusion sets a monstrous and unreal value. When the turbid activity by which avarice acquires wealth subsides, the unsubstantial possession appears in its real character, as worthless, because not connected with any principles by which it could be rendered useful, pleasant, or consoling; and the heart which has been robbed, in the darling pursuit, of its more amiable graces, sinks in the bosom, continually appalled by that awful enunciation, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

That he who estimates the present condition in its real and relative character, should constantly guard against the speciousness and danger of avarice, is a truth which might be extorted from the miser's heart. The sacri-

vice which it demands is greater than any rational being should yield for the possession of that which a moment may wrench away for ever. Sympathy, benevolence, the exalted enjoyments of the intellect and heart, nay, honesty itself, are immolated by this grovelling and detestable vice: and, in reference to the principles which it generates, who can forget the awful declaration, that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." After that Divine assurance, let avarice suppress its morbid aspirations, and rational creatures be convinced of its deadly nature and influence.

FAITH THE PROPER BASIS OF SPECULATION.

WHENEVER we attempt metaphysical speculations, we must begin with a foundation of faith. And being sure, from Revelation, that God is omnipotent and omnipresent, it appears to me no improper use of our faculties to trace, even in the natural universe, the acts of his power, and the results of his wisdom, and to draw parallels from the infinite to the finite mind. Remember, we are taught that man was created in the image of God, and I think it cannot be doubted that, in the progress of society, man has been made a great instrument by his energies and labours for improving the moral universe. Compare the Greeks and Romans with the Assyrians and Babylonians, and the ancient Greeks and Romans with the nations of modern Christendom, and it cannot, I think, be questioned, that there has been a great superiority in the latter nations, and that their improvements have been subservient to a more exalted state of intellectual and religious existence. If this little globe has been so modified by its powerful and active inhabitants, I cannot help thinking that, in other systems, beings

of a superior nature, under the influence of a Divine will, may act nobler parts.

It is, perhaps, rather a poetical than a philosophical idea, yet I cannot help forming the opinion, that genii or seraphic intelligence may inhabit these systems, and may be the ministers of the eternal mind in producing changes in them similar to those which have taken place on the earth. Time is almost a human word, and change entirely a human idea; in the system of nature we should rather say progress than change. The sun appears to sink in the ocean in darkness, but it rises in another hemisphere; the ruins of a city fall, but they are often used to form more magnificent structures, as at Rome; but even when they are destroyed, so as to produce only dust, nature asserts her empire over them, and the vegetable world rises in constant youth, and in a period of annual successions, by the labours of man, providing food, vitality, and beauty upon the wrecks of monuments which were once raised for purposes of glory, but which are now applied to objects of utility.—*Sir Humphry Davy.*

THE PULPIT OBSERVER.

THE REV. MR. CHILD.
Bishopgate Church.

ON Monday morning Mr. Child delivered a Discourse from Isaiah xxxviii. 1: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live." After some introductory remarks, relative to the character and situation of Hezekiah, the preacher inquired whether if a similar sentence were pronounced against those present, they could plead a similar cause of revocation? Were his hearers, by a previous life of faith, hope, and good works, prepared to die, and enter into glory? If not, how awfully requisite was it that they should avoid the fate of those who died in sin! It was, indeed, no pleasant task for a man thus to scrutinize his heart and look forward to his latter end; and death was

rarely a favourite contemplation of those who were hasting to become its victims. To tell him that all creation existed for his convenience, that every natural beauty was designed for his pleasure, flattered his vanity and self-importance. But to pronounce his sins, and certainty of death, produced a far different effect. Every thing that related to his origin was humiliating because it invariably led him to the assurance that he must die, and plunge into the abyss of eternity. The body, divested of comeliness and life, and mouldering in the tomb, made mortality poison life, and was a ghastly portrait which few could bear to contemplate. Many of the heathens turned away from it; they lived without hope, and died without consolation.

But it was surprising to find among Christians such a disposition to avert the reflections of death. They took precautions against other species of apprehended evil, and would take means to prevent surprise. Yet in that which was really of a dreadful magnitude, the utmost apathy was displayed. But would any one who was walking on a precipice be blind to his peril, or indifferent to rendering himself secure? To Christians the tomb was open, and there was no certainty as to the time in which they might be called to fill it. But instead of embracing religion, every means seemed to be adopted to prevent the intrusion of the unwelcome thought of approaching death, which they sometimes hoped to drive altogether away. Yet whatever might be the fancied security generated by such a delusion, death would still rapidly approach, and would quickly arrive. While some were amassing riches, and others displaying them, time was silently conveying them alike to the grave. Danger was not lessened by not being remarked.

Where proper principles had been formed, death would not be excluded from the thought. It would be contemplated without dread, and with resignation: it would only be terrible to those who were unprepared. We were not sent here only to dream of pleasure. If any indulged such a delusive belief, let them regard the sorrows of Christ and his apostles, whose lives were constantly devoted to acts of holiness and duty. After alluding

to those causes by which reflection on the purposes and termination of life are expelled, Mr. Child observed, that many professing Christians were afraid of extremes in Religion: but what were the extremes of which such persons were afraid? Religion would subdue vanity, and proposed to restrain vicious impulses by the influences of the Gospel; to make this life subservient to the highest spiritual ends, and not to be abandoned to useless secular pursuits and degrading enjoyments. These were some of the excesses which generated the professing Christian's alarm. But let such fallacious suppositions of the alleged excesses be dissipated. Let those who indulge in such shallow and perilous subterfuge inquire of those who mouldered in the dark retreat of the grave, What were they now? What the lips that once conveyed wisdom and experience?—the face that once beamed with intelligence, beauty, and smiles? Let the living descend into the dismal solitude of the tomb, and, great God! how lost to sensibility must be those who contemplated the scene without emotion! Then let them picture their own final and approaching hour; let them draw near to the last moment; let them behold the stiffened limbs; the eyes whose lustre was subdued by the dimness of death,—the friends whom they had esteemed, the kindred they had loved, and the minister of God drawn near; when no other signs of life remained but the convulsive throbs which declared that the soul was going to God to be condemned or exculpated! This was no far-fetched picture of imagination. It was a declaration of realities which all must experience,—a description of that which must inevitably arrive!

Mr. Child then adverted to the consolation which Religion afforded in the hour of death; and concluded by remarking that the general apprehension which men displayed, was given by Providence to induce those cautions which were necessary for the preservation of life. But the Christian, he resumed, was prepared for death. He constantly imagined his last hour, and in that he had an assurance that he should find rest from his labours. His regard and services had been bestowed on Religion; but on the bed of death he derived satisfaction

from the sacrifices he had made to God, and could ascertain the comparative excellence of repentance. If, from religious motives, he had refrained from transitory and instant pleasures, he now felt the advantage; and that every suffering for the cause of God, every morsel refused to luxury and given to want, would never be forgotten. His various struggles at last ended, and in rest from his labours. The former mercies of God induced and confirmed the dying Christian's hope; he no more doubted or dreaded God; and the terrors of the Judge were lost in the mercies of the Saviour; and while thus entering into the other world, his soul would magnify the Lord, and his spirit rejoice in God his Saviour. Where then was the victory of the grave, or the sting of death? The Christian had escaped from a wicked and abandoned world, and from the aggressions and liabilities of his own passion. Well might the apostle exclaim, "The time is short, the day approacheth, and the Lord is even at the door." Instead of shrinking, the apostles desired to suffer that they might be speedily united with their Lord, for while absent, they felt like the branch that was separated from its stock, or the rivers that were wandering from their bed.

In conclusion, Mr. Child remarked that the Christian would seek consolation here, rather than expect felicity. Peace and prosperity often caused dangerous illusions, which he should ever strive to avoid. He regretted nothing on earth, but thanked God for having abridged his affliction with his days. Every thing but Christian virtues would vanish at the last hour; when the redeemed and spiritual soul would be borne on the wings of blessed angels into the regions of immortality.

THE REV. MR. HARKNESS,
Albion Chapel, Moorfields.

ON Wednesday evening, the above Rev. Gentlemen delivered a Discourse from Isaiah I. 11: "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I speak, and it shall prosper in the thing unto which I sent it." After observing that some regarded the Word of God with indifference, as though

they stood in need of no spiritual aids, while others would not give the world in exchange for the blessings and eternal advantages which the Word of God conveyed, Mr. Harkness proceeded to notice the aim of God in sending his Word, the promises which it gave, and the encouragement which it afforded. Although the subject was comprehensive, it might be presented in a very simple view.

The Word of God was sent for the condemnation of sin. That the world loved darkness rather than light, was manifest from those who imagined they could improve the Word of God. They knew what would please their corrupted tastes, but what would please them would not please God. Vanity was not to be gratified, nor could pride be acceptable in his sight: but a broken and contrite spirit he would accept as a pleasing sacrifice. What then was the aim of the Word of God? It was to convince the world of sin; and every other object would result in this. Its aim was to set before men Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to make them look upon him as a friend; and to assure the sinner of the divine mercy, and that God was pacified. The Word was quick and powerful in shewing the depravity of the heart, the necessity of conversion, and that the sinful habits would never pass in the judgment of God. If this were its aim; if it were sent to be accepted; if it were sent thus to arouse from the apathy of sin; if the ministers of God were sent to declare unpleasant things to the wicked, and thereby effect their conversion, it would not be sent in vain, but accomplish that which God pleased.

It was, secondly, sent to promise the aid of the Spirit. It designed to save mankind from their sins, and to shew the means of human salvation. This was the grand intention which it announced; and though it might not always be perceived as the design of God; though this assurance might not always be felt; it arose from the falling off in the believers' faith, and not in what God designed. He constantly urged us to believe in Jesus Christ. "The spirit and the bride said, Come." In the free exercise of his mercy, God made a universal call to sinners. The non-effect of the invitation arose from disbelief. Christians would

sometimes be in that state in which God appeared as a condemning Judge: but the question was, not what we might perceive, but what was in the Word of God? God was not willing that any should perish. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner." This was the Word of God: "Believe in Christ, and be ye saved." And this would be perceived where seriousness and proper feeling were not shut out of the mind. A man conscious of his sin, had his discoveries enlarged, and then could see that grace abounded with God, and that with him was plenteous salvation:—such was the man on whom God would look with complacency.

The Word was most evidently sent to reclaim from sin. It urged all to holiness, and enjoined all to avoid evil. Every hope inspired by the Gospel was contingent to our cultivation of the former, and shunning of the latter. If any man said otherwise, that this was not the grand object of the Word; that we were not to draw near to and enjoy the friendship of God, he lied. This was the great test: Had the Word penetrated and constrained our hearts to the love of God? Had it made us more fearful of offending, more loving to our brethren, and caused us to lay aside all malice? Speculative knowledge was useless unless united with charity,—all such knowledge was lost. Though we might admire the beautiful system of morality contained in the Gospel, if a selfish, unkind, unfeeling, and detracting spirit remained, it would have been better that we had not known the way of Christ, and been without Christianity.

Mr. Harkness then alluded to the meaning of the text, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." It was obvious that this would not be its effect in every case. Whether we consulted observation or experience, this was an evident and melancholy fact. There were different classes of hearers of the Word. Some received it with joy, till the tempter came; in some it was overcome by the cares of the world; and there was only one class in which its roots would strike.

There was an assurance, however, that

the word would accomplish its object in every case where there was a candid belief. As the rain fertilized the earth, so did the word of God tend to effect the conversion of souls. But the rain could not fertilize the way side, how copious soever might be its showers. Yet the fault was not in the rain, but in the unprepared and sterile state of the soil on which it fell: and so it was with the word of God: it could not effect its end where the heart was filled with vain imaginations, and those impulses by which its influences were resisted. But the inefficiency could not be attributed to God any more than a patient who refused medicine could attribute non-recovery to the physician. There must be a desire for salvation from the Word; and its efficacy would be determined by the consenting inclinations of the will. It was addressed to man as a rational creature. God did, indeed, by influencing the will, bring many to an honest reception of his Word. If asked, how many were brought to acknowledgment by such an influence, and in what mode it operated, it might be answered, that all who believed had practically received that influence; and that God knew how to touch the human will without impairing its freedom: and we ought to be assured, that however outward means might seem to contribute to conversion, it was the Spirit of God by which that conversion was really effected.

Mr. Harkness in the concluding division of his subject, urged the encouragement which the assurance that the Word would accomplish its object. That object pleased God, and was devised by himself. His rejection of sin, and his declarations of mercy, were so many evidences of his intention to save: and he gave his only son to be a propitiation for our sins, that we might not die but have everlasting life. What could we say after such declarations, but that salvation was the object of God? There was indeed joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repented, and this resulted from the zeal which was enkindled by the merciful intention of the Almighty.

The Word of God was framed by himself for the purpose of salvation. It might not appear so in all cases to men, who would sometimes decry the notion of redemption by the entire grace of God.

But mere human exertions however must fail; and if we looked to man instead of looking to God, this object could not be accomplished; for it was not he that sowed, nor he that watered, but God himself that gave the increase. Hope must not centre in human ordinances, but constantly look to the Almighty Spirit of God, for the accomplishment of his promises; we should not trust in any thing but to his love, who spake, and it was done.

In conclusion, Mr. Harkness remarked, that we were encouraged to believe and pray. We should pray that God's Word might be blessed with efficacy in our own hearts. His promises were given to excite expectation; and we should not keep silent, but cry unto God, that he would assist us; for if we were not come to the belief, that he could and would give what we required, and were not determined to make the experiment, there was little reason to expect that we were in a state capable of receiving the assistance which he was ready to impart.

Mr. Harkness's sermon was earnest and affectionate; but we regret that his articulation was sometimes so suddenly rapid, as to be indistinct to those unaccustomed to his delivery. We have, independent of the limits and condensation which we are compelled to observe, been obliged to omit several passages which were rendered obscure by that occasional rapidity of enunciation.

REVIEW.

Consolations in Travel: or the Last Days of a Philosopher. By SIR HUMPHRY DAVY. London: John Murray.

THIS delightful book contains, in the shape of dialogues, the sentiments of the eminent author on some of the most interesting subjects which can engage human attention; and such is the ease, elegance, and spirit with which it is written, that we imagine ourselves one of the philosopher's party, rather than the readers of his instructive pages. Sir Humphry Davy was one of the greatest chemists of his day. His life was devoted to the study of material combin-

ation, and he was well acquainted with the properties of matter. It is therefore gratifying to have his testimony against that mischievous supposition that matter itself is capable of producing thought and volition, and thence that there is no spiritual existence or First Cause. In the dialogue on "Immortality," the absurdity of this doctrine, which some half-informed vendors of blasphemy are so anxious to diffuse, is incidentally but clearly exposed; and the superiority and consolation of Revealed Religion are alluded to by the author in a manner which is creditable to his intellect and his heart. He who is without religious sympathies is almost beyond the pale of rational nature. The work before us proves how compatible is enlarged knowledge with Christian belief. As a work which cannot fail to gratify those who can appreciate the talent which conveys knowledge and opinions in the most unostentatious and agreeable manner, we recommend "The Last Days of a Philosopher."

The Great Importance of a Religious Life. By WILLIAM MELMOUTH. *The Prayers of DOCTOR JOHNSON.* London: Washbourn, Salisbury Square.

THE former work has already gained the approbation of the religious public; and its matter and style justify the commendation and extensive perusal which it has already obtained. Without urging any peculiar doctrinal view, the author recommends the practice of those precepts the excellence and sublimity of which are obvious and impressive. The happiness of a Christian life is plainly but powerfully evinced; and few, we should think, could rise from the perusal of this little work, without being gratified and amended.

The vast talent of Dr. Johnson has rendered all that he did extremely interesting in public estimation. His learning and piety, allied as they were with the imperfections of occasional pride and apparent superstition, have procured for his memory as great an esteem as the labours and character of one man ever perhaps excited. —We will not say that his prayers have anything intrinsically superior in themselves; but they show the mind of their author; and, from the "Colossus

of Literature," they introduce us to a Christian abased in the presence of his Maker.

Both the editions of these works are very neat, portable, and cheap.

POETRY.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

AMID the drear expanse of treach'rous life,
Where nought seems certain but uncertainty,
Where every hour proclaims a ceaseless change,
And mocks the heart with unsubstantial joy;
Where Av'rice o'er its golden heap repines
And Poverty endures a freezing blast;
Where bloom and beauty pass as shades away
And tott'ring age approximates the tomb;
O! is there that on which the soul can rest,
With that assurance which allays each fear,
And speaks of bliss as lasting and secure
As something more than fancy's fleeting dream?
Earth yields it not, nor can inventive man
Supply immortal spirits' high desire!
O'er human destiny bid Fortune shed
The radiance of her brightest, warmest beam.
Bid sweet participation brighten joy,
And friendship ev'ry joyous thought reflect;
Bid Hymen bless the tender marriage's smile,
And children cluster round the parent's knee:
Bid all conspire to thrill the panting heart,
And fancy deck the scene with gleaming bliss.
Yet will corroding sorrow's rust invade:
Or thieves break in and steal the prize away.
Or if no sorrow lingers o'er man's path
Time bears his bright possession fast away,
And of his good, once eagerly pursued,
Nought but remembrance soon remains. Then
where

The long desired reality of bliss—
The changeless clime of ever blooming joy?
Religion tells of scenes beyond the grave,
Where swift mutation does not ever blight
The flowers of present happiness. 'Tis there
Religion, based on certain truth, declar'd
By Deity once clothed in human flesh,
Conduct's the spirit's e'er excursive eye;
And through the gloom of oft-recurring woe
Displays a bright and everlasting scene,
Bestow'd, illum'd, and render'd sure by God,
Exempt from all terrestrial bitter change.
What then, while Christian hope sustains the
heart,
Can e'er destroy the Christian's inward peace?
He, as a stranger only, lingers here,
And soon will reach his fixed celestial home.
God is the parent of his glowing hope,
And Truth eternal never yet deceived!
Tempestuous Life! in vain thy storms resound,
Or drear Adversity extends her gloom!

Incessant Change what does thy power avail
When Christian hope each dread attack re-
pels!

A changeless heaven lingers near the earth,
And Hope enjoys it ere we entrance gain!
P.

REPERTORY OF FACTS, *Observations, and Intelligence.*

SUPERIORITY OF DIVINE REVELATION.

THE differing prospects we may have of
heaven, may not ill adumbrate to us the
differing discoveries that may be made
of the attributes of its Maker. For
though a man may with his naked eye see
heaven to be a very glorious object, yet
when his eye is assisted with a good
telescope he can not only discover a num-
ber of stars, fixed and wandering, which
his naked eye would never have shown
him; but those planets which he could
see before, will appear much bigger and
more distinct. So, though bare reason
will suffice to make a man behold many
glorious attributes in the Deity, yet the
the same reason, when assisted by Reve-
lation, may enable a man to discover far
more excellencies in God, and perceive
those he contemplated before, far greater
and more distinctly.—Boyle.

CONSTANT CHANGES OF MATTER.

A VERY slight contemplation of nature
is sufficient to shew us that matter, un-
der every visible form and modification,
when regarded in its general mass, is per-
petually changing; alternately living,
dying, and reviving; decomposing into
elements that elude our pursuit; and re-
combining into new shapes, and energies,
and modes of existence. The purest and
most compact metals become tarnished
or converted into a calx or oxide on their
surface, and the most durable and crys-
tallized rocks crumble into granules; and
the matter constituting these oxides and
granules, by an additional series of oper-
ations, is still further decomposed, till
every vestige of their late character is
lost, and the elementary principles of
which they consisted are appropriated
to other purposes, and spring to view

under other forms and faculties. The same process takes place in the organized world. The germ becomes a seed, the seed a sapling, the sapling a tree; the embryo becomes an infant, the infant a youth, the youth a man; and having thus ascended the scale of maturity, both, in like manner, begin the downward path to decay; and, as far as relates to the visible materials of which they consist, both at length moulder into one common elementary mass, furnish fuel for fresh generations of animal or vegetable existence; so that all is in motion, all striving to burst the bonds of its present state; not an atom is idle; and the frugal economy of nature makes one set of materials answer the purpose of many, and moulds it into every diversified figure of being, and beauty, and happiness.—*Good.*

TENDENCY OF ATHEISM.

THE exclusion of a Supreme Being, and of a superintending Providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.—*Robert Hall.*

THE EXTINCTION OF DIFFERENT ANIMAL SPECIES.

EVERY region has been enriched with wonders of animal life that have long been extinct for ever. Where is now that enormous shamoeth whose bulk out-rivalled the elephant's? Where that gigantic tapir, of a structure nearly as mountainous, whose huge skeleton has been found in a fossil state in the forests of France and Germany; whilst its only liv-

ing type, a pigmy of what has departed, exists in the wilds of America? Where is now the breathing form of the fossil sloth of America, the magalonix of Cuvier, whose size meted that of the ox? where the mighty moniter, outstripping the lengthened bulk of the crocodile?—itself too a lord of the ocean, and yet, whose only remains have been traced in the quarries of Maestricht; to which, as to another leviathan, we may apply the forcible description of the book of Job: 'at whose appearing the mighty were afraid, and who made the deep to boil as a cauldron: who esteemed iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood; who had not his like upon the earth, and was a king among the children of pride.'—Over this recondite and bewildering subject, sceptics have laughed, and critics have puzzled themselves: but it is natural history alone that can find us a clue to the labyrinth, that enables us to repose faith in the records of antiquity, and that establishes the important position that the extravagance of a description is no argument against the truth of a description, and that it is somewhat too much to deny that a thing has existed formerly, for the mere reason that it does not exist now.—*Good.*

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

As man has the voyage of death before him, whatever may be his employment, he should be ready at the Master's call; and an old man should never be far from the shore, lest he should not be able to get himself ready.—*Epictetus.*

ERRATA IN NO. IX.

Page 139, first column, for "by some of its own plastic energy," read "some plastic energy of its own."

Page 136, second column, for "radical perfection," read "radical projection."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. L. will much oblige us by sending the communication which he promised. We hope that distance has not impaired his memory.

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